Testimony of the Greater Quebec Movement before the National Assembly on Bill 1
Peter G. White

Mr. President, Members of the Commission,

I would like to present to you, very briefly, a theoretical framework for the concept of national minority, taken from the book *Multicultural Citizenship – A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, published by the brilliant young Canadian political theorist Will Kymlicka, by Clarendon Press, Oxford, in 1995.

A national minority exists wherever we observe, within a given state, the coexistence of several nations, where the term "nation" signifies a historical community, more or less complete from the point of view of institutions, which occupies a given territory or homeland, and which has a distinct language and culture, and a shared will to live together.

In this sociological sense, the notion of "nation" is closely linked to that of "people" or "culture."

It must be emphasized that such a nation is not founded on descent or blood.

Therefore, a country where more than one nation lives is not a nation-state,

but a multinational state, and smaller cultures constitute “national minorities.”

We therefore maintain that English-speaking Quebecers constitute a national minority within the multinational state of Quebec, just as French-speaking Quebecers constitute a national minority within the multinational state of Canada.

In a multinational state, the constitution is, among other things, a contract between the minority or minorities and the majority, defining the terms that have been negotiated and agreed upon by the various parties, with the aim of establishing and building together the enterprise or adventure of their country.

All parties must then officially approve these terms.

Incidentally, we must always remember that the National Assembly of Quebec has never officially ratified the Constitution Act of 1982.

To feel secure within a larger dominant culture, A national minority needs five guarantees:

(1) formal recognition of its existence as a legitimate national minority within society as a whole,

and formal recognition of its legitimate right to its cultural perpetuation within the majority community;

(2) a clear and formal definition, agreed upon by both the minority and the majority, of the characteristics that distinguish the national minority from the majority, which the national minority wishes to preserve and protect from assimilation or homogenization, and which the majority agrees to recognize and respect;

(3) the undeniable right to self-government in the areas that essentially characterize it;

(4) the undeniable right to be represented in the institutions of the majority community; and

(5) the right to veto any proposed constitutional amendments that might be detrimental to any constitutional protection of the rights it has acquired as a national minority,

or, in other words, the binding consent of each party to Contractual modifications affecting your rights or status, a clause normally included in any type of contract.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy to answer any questions or comments you may have.